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EDITORIAL COMMENT

SHALL WE HAVE AN ARMY SCHOOL OF NURSING?

It has been understood, all the year, that the whole programme of the three associations at the convention was to be devoted to conditions due to the war, and almost every paper read or discussion held, was in some way concerned either with home conditions because of the war or with war conditions in which nursing interests were involved.

The two papers which were of greatest importance were those presented by Colonel Winford Smith in which he submitted plans for an army school of nursing and by Dr. Goldwater, entitled *A Nursing Crisis*, in which he advocated the employment of nurses' aides as they have been trained for the past three or four years through the educational committees of the Red Cross.

Colonel Smith's paper represents Miss Goodrich's plan which has been worked out since her appointment in the Surgeon General's office and in which she has had the assistance of both Miss Delano and Miss Thompson of the Army Nurse Corps. We have not a copy of this paper before us and quote from memory, but the plan as we understand it is, that there shall be organized an army school of nursing for a very carefully selected group of women, nurses' aides and others who would give their services during the war, to be accepted and trained as are probationers in our schools, to be turned back into the civil hospitals during their third year for service in those departments which cannot be obtained in army hospitals,—care of women and children, obstetrics, gynecology, etc. The standard of admission would be a four years' high school course with a diploma, the age of admission from twenty-one to thirty-five. It is the intention also to work out plans for affiliation with certain types of civil hospitals. The three national associations have endorsed this plan by a large majority.

In Dr. Goldwater's paper were given interesting statistics of the number of beds now available for the sick and wounded of the Army and the Navy, of the number that will be available, and an estimate

that ultimately the Government will need 50,000 nurses to serve over 400,000 sick and wounded. Dr. Goldwater's argument is that the country cannot spare this number of nurses from civil life, that the proposed army school would divert large numbers of applicants from the training schools, that the work at home will very seriously suffer, and that such an army school would leave the country at the close of the war with a surplus of nurses which would work great hardship to the members of the nursing profession. He asserts that the women of the leisure classes are the only labor reserve of the country, that they are willing and eager to serve and should be permitted to do so.

While Miss Delano, as head of the Red Cross Nursing Service, was a member of the committee which has drawn up the plans for the army nursing school, as has already been mentioned, she believes that all the resources of the country which can be brought to meet the situation should be gathered and will be needed if the war continues for a period of years. She does not repudiate her pledge to the Red Cross to train the lay women who might in time of war give voluntary service to the country as nurses' aides, a pledge carried out through the coöperation of thousands of nurses who have served as members of committees and as instructors of classes in elementary hygiene and home care of the sick which have been held pretty generally throughout the country for the past three or four years. We are with Miss Delano in this, for the pledge given to the Red Cross by the group of women called into conference on November 14, 1912, in New York City, and reported in the JOURNAL for December of that year, was as serious a one as has ever been given by one group of women to another. Although there was then no prospect of war, it was the distinct understanding that these women were to be prepared to serve should war occur. There were present at this conference, Miss Delano, Miss Nevins, Mrs. Tice, Miss Nichols, Miss Maxwell, Miss Palmer, as members of the National Committee, and by invitation, Miss Wald, Miss Goodrich and Miss McIsaac.

Before the close of the convention in Cleveland an official telegram had been received from the Surgeon General's office stating that the plan for an army school of nursing had been rejected by the General Staff. The joint boards of the three national organizations held a final conference on receipt of this news and appointed a committee to make an appeal for further consideration of the plan.

Our own feeling, as expressed in the open meeting, is that the great army cantonments containing from 20,000 to 50,000 soldiers do not form the proper environment in which to train inexperienced, unsophisticated young women who are at the age when they are most susceptible to the attraction of the men in khaki, not that they would

be in any danger while on duty in the army hospitals under the supervision of instructors, but that they could not be controlled, any more than the enlisted men can be controlled, when outside the military boundaries of the camp.

The answer to these objections given by those favoring the Army School of Nursing is: First, that many more applications would be received than could be accepted and that the surplus would be turned back to the civil hospitals until vacancies arose or new army schools were opened. Second, that the pledge made to the women trained as nurses' aides would be fulfilled by giving them a full training instead of several years of service with no recognition at the end. Third, that inevitably these women are to be part of the personnel of our army hospitals and that they can be kept under better control as students than as volunteers.

We know that nurses have been slow in responding to the call for service, but with only 10,000 in the different departments of military service, and with our survey showing 80,000 graduates, we believe there are large numbers who have not been reached. We are not willing to concede that the nursing profession has failed, as has been implied by both Dr. Smith and Dr. Goldwater, at least until we can know the result of the Red Cross drive for enrollment for which preparations have been going on for months and which is to take place during the month of June. This drive has been held back for the Y. M. C. A., for the Liberty Loan, and for the campaign for Red Cross membership, yet this drive for the Red Cross Nursing Service is one of the most vital that the country has to consider.

Undoubtedly this whole question will be settled before this issue of the JOURNAL is in the hands of our readers, but it is a matter of nursing history which should be recorded here.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE CONVENTION

In spite of war which has drained our cities of so many nurses and in spite of the heavy tasks laid upon those who remain behind, the twenty-first annual convention of the American Nurses' Association and the last to be held under the old plan of membership, had a greater recorded attendance than any which preceded it. One thousand four hundred thirty-five nurses were registered as in attendance, and if the evening meetings could have been canvassed, too, we should probably have a record of hundreds more. The Committee of Arrangements had planned for 1200 at the utmost, and it speaks well for their adaptability that there was no greater inconvenience from the unexpected crowd than a hurried carrying of chairs from one room to another in order that no round table need be held on the floor. There

was great coöperation between the Cleveland people in general and their nurses in the matter of publicity, of drives, of evening meetings and of pleasant teas. The convention was a serious one, as befitted the occasion, those in attendance spent their time in listening to papers or in participation in discussions, formal or informal, yet all felt the pleasant atmosphere of good fellowship and of welcome and all could leave the city with a wider view of the profession they had chosen and with a higher ideal for their own share of the work to be done.

It was good to see many of the older and well known women; it was equally good to see the eager young faces of those who had come for the first time, those who are to carry forward the work now established or just beginning.

The evening meeting devoted to the Red Cross, the Army and Navy was like a beautiful pageant, for pupil nurses came marching in uniform, Red Cross nurses attended in a body and were beautiful to behold, while individuals were dressed in the various uniforms provided by the Army, the Navy or the Red Cross for various types of service. Boy Scouts carried flags, a service flag was unfurled, patriotic music stirred the soul, and the addresses were worthy of their setting. It was one of the pictures that linger in the memory when the details have become dim.

Everyone went home tired because everyone wanted to attend all the meetings there were. There is no use in our objecting to conflicting engagements, our associations have grown too large to make it possible to have one long programme with no two sessions interfering. Just as long as there are so many topics to be discussed and just as long as people demand that all shall be included in a single convention, just so long shall we have to have concurrent sessions and the bewildered delegate will have to choose which of the many attractive sessions she shall attend. Certainly it is better to have an embarrassment of riches than not enough to pay for the coming.

The reorganization seems to be going cheerfully forward. It is certainly a tribute to the fair and convincing way in which Miss Goodrich has presented the plan and to the patience and clearness with which Miss Sly has worked it out that we have at this time twenty-five states ready to take their places in the new scheme while the rest are following and will not be long in making the final adjustment.

The August JOURNAL will contain the proceedings of the American Nurses' Association and the papers of this and many of the joint sessions.

LEGAL REBUKE FOR SLANDERING MILITARY NURSES

In a recent decision of the Federal Grand Jury handed up to Judge Augustus N. Hand in the Federal District Court sitting in New York City, Dr. Emma B. Culbertson, senior surgeon of the New England Hospital for Women and Children at Boston, Mass., was severely arraigned for statements made at Vassar College, in Poughkeepsie, N. Y., seriously reflecting on the morals of Red Cross nurses in France.

Various stories have recently come to the notice of the Federal Grand Jury, to the effect that frightful and scandalous conditions attend the Red Cross nurses in the American hospitals in France, and Dr. Emma B. Culbertson is alleged to have said, typical of such statements, "It is a matter of common knowledge that 200 beds have been reserved in the Sloane Maternity Hospital, New York City, for Red Cross nurses who were returning from France and expecting immediate confinement."

The Grand Jury was asked to investigate this statement on the ground that if true, the military authorities, in failing to safeguard the nurses in the service of the United States Army abroad, were guilty of gross neglect; and if false, it would constitute a violation of the espionage act. They found that Dr. Culbertson had absolutely no knowledge or information upon which to base her statement, that the statement was entirely without foundation, and that no Red Cross nurse has returned to this country from foreign service in such condition. Dr. Culbertson admitted that the statements were without foundation, and the jury excused her of vicious intent.

But the judge in addressing the jury, significantly said:

In future matters of this sort where the statements are recklessly untrue and in the absence of adequate explanation you will be justified in judging them as wilful violations of the law.

These statements are to be severely deprecated, especially in view of the circumstances under which they were uttered in the presence of young women eager to go abroad to serve as nurses. They discouraged the enlistment of nurses and were most reprehensible and disgraceful.

The jury also considered the story investigated by the *New York World*, of two Belgian girls who had come to New York with their arms amputated and their tongues cut off, and were then taken to a maternity hospital. The *World* denounced this story and explained that it had published it because "persons of intelligence and high motives" had accepted it as true and assisted in spreading it. The Grand Jury found this story, also, to be without the slightest foundation.

It may be of interest to our readers and to nurses generally, to know in what way the court proposes to deal with such slanders in the future.

THE RESPONSE OF NEW GRADUATES

One of the interesting developments which has come from this war is the enrollment for war service of an entire graduating class. Our attention has already been called to two that have responded in this way: the graduating class of the Physicians' Hospital of Plattsburgh, N. Y., and that of the Park View Sanatorium, Savannah, Ga. Doubtless there are many in which a very large percentage is enrolling. We know that 80 per cent of the class just graduating from St. John's Riverside Hospital, Yonkers, is enrolled for such service. One school of very high standing has offered to lend its senior class for the entire third year, for military service. Superintendents of training schools can do much to help meet the demands of the Army, by seeing to it that all their graduates who are qualified for army service, are strongly impressed with the need.

PLANS OF THE INTERSTATE SECRETARY

The Interstate Secretary, after being in Vermont for the state meeting, May 31st, and at Plattsburg, N. Y., for graduating exercises, will go to Illinois for a meeting of the second and third districts at Elgin, June 8th. During July and August she will make her itinerary for the early fall and winter, so requests for her visits should come in promptly.

THE MAY JOURNAL

A large portion of our mail at this writing consists of complaints regarding the non-arrival of the May JOURNAL, some courteously expressed as a gentle reminder, some telling us in the most bristling manner that this is a nice way to conduct our business. To all, our answer is,—War. The printers have all gone to work in the munitions factories and it is a wonder there is any May JOURNAL at all. We are exceedingly sorry that it is late, we are sorrier that we ever prided ourselves on getting the magazine out on time. All we can promise for the future is our utmost endeavor to have it issued promptly, but for ourselves and our subscribers we would counsel patience.

Extra copies of the special military nursing number may be ordered from the JOURNAL office, 45 South Union Street, Rochester, N. Y., for 35 cents each. Foreign postage, 6 cents extra.